

## **Prospects and preliminary work on female occupational structure in England from 1500 to the national census**

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The historiography in the field of women's labour force participation in centuries before the 20<sup>th</sup> suffers from a marked lack of data. Our project is therefore to assess what evidence is available and to look at how these sources can be interpreted.

For reasons of practicality, we are in the first instance equating work with gainful employment. Because of being situated within a project based on occupational identifiers, we are starting with that as a basis but in the long run are interested in the Swedish time-use approach to work. Fortunately, there turn out to be enough occupational titles for women in the English records to form a starting point for investigations

The customary historiographical position in England is that women's identity was marital rather than occupational. There is no assumption that women were a significant part of the labour force, as there is in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia. Rather, the model is that women joined the labour force before marriage if they needed to (i.e., were poor); married women did not work for remuneration (because they were too busy taking care of domestic subsistence needs); and widows only worked for pay if they were poor (i.e., if their husbands had not left them a sufficient income on which to survive).

We are ultimately seeking the same goals as the male part of the project – to ascertain long-term changes in occupational structure. But in order to get to a position where we can do that, for women, we have to address issues along the way which do not seem to affect the interpretation of male occupational identity, including:

- What does it mean when a woman has an occupational identifier? (is she 'full-time' or is she 'really' a blacksmith?)
- When a woman is not identified by occupation, does that mean she has no paid work?
- How does unpaid domestic work, and number of children, relate to paid work?

We present here a review of the twelve classes of sources examined to date, giving examples of what they might tell us. We start with early census material, national tax returns, and savings banks, and moving on to trade directories, religious censuses, court records, ecclesiastical and parochial records, listings of the poor, apprenticeship records, school accounts, hospital accounts, and estate and household accounts.

### ***1) Early censuses***

A national census was first instituted in 1801 in Britain, and taken every decade thereafter. All of them recorded occupations, but in different forms, and the instructions for recording women's work was most susceptible to variation from the census office and

to different interpretations by enumerators. The manuscript returns for the period 1801-1831, which contain the most occupational detail, were destroyed in 1931. The aggregate data presentation for these years contains no useful occupational data for women. For 1801, the original returns from only 145 districts survive, and tracking these down is problematic. But we know from the examples surviving in the Cambridge Group archive that most enumerators noted only the occupation of the head of household, and often not for female heads of household.

In very rare instances the occupations of all members of the household are listed, as in Winwick with Hulme, Lancashire in the first national census of 1801. Here the enumerator distinguished occupations for different family members in 96 households. This listing exemplifies difficulties with the word 'spinster' which is used as both an occupation and a marital designation for around 300 years. Only where the enumerator identifies married women as spinsters is it possible to be certain that he was using the word in its occupational sense. This is a major issue: because the word is normally used today in its marital sense, it is assumed so used unless proved otherwise in historical documents. But because spinning had to have been such an enormous employment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,<sup>1</sup> the assumption of marital usage is probably obscuring large numbers of spinning women. The use of 'spinner' (the masculine form) to describe women grew over the eighteenth century, and partially ameliorates the problem, but it appears to have been regional.

Occasionally in the pre-census period a local cleric took a notion to create his own census, for reasons lost to us, and the result has survived the intervening years. Three of these are interesting in different ways: Westmorland in 1797; Denham, Buckinghamshire in 1749; and Chilvers Cotton, Warwickshire in 1836.

Most of the Westmorland census lists occupation of the head of household only, but some parishes record occupations for all household members. In this part of the country the predominant extra-domestic female employment is in dairying, which is managed as well as staffed by women, but there also appears some textile work, clothing, nursing, and occasionally mining, which is a substantial male employer. The Cragg family illustrates the range of economic activity found within a single family:

**Table 1.1: From the Constablewick of Murton, Parish of Appleby St Michael, Westmoreland, 1787**

<b>Household</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Joseph Cragg Sen	Master of family	Blacksmith
Hanna Cragg	Wife	Housekeeper
Michael Cragg	Son	Miner
Sally Cragg	Daughter	Manager of dairy
Nancy Cragg	Daughter	Spinster [spinning]
Mary Cragg	Daughter	Ore washer
John Cragg	Boy	
Thomas Cragg	Boy	
Joseph Cragg	Infant	

<sup>1</sup> Craig Muldrew, on spinners, forthcoming.

This census is interesting for its use of the word 'housekeeper' to describe married women's domestic work, which may be the earliest use of the term in this way. Previously it was applied to a woman who was not the mistress of the house (who was absent), paid to do her work. But in this source the word 'housewife' is used interchangeably with 'housekeeper'. Housekeeping could also of course have encompassed gardening, small-scale husbandry, and the sale of surplus produce, plus paid piece work or odd jobs. The census only lists the principal occupation.

In Denham, Buckinghamshire in 1749, only the occupations of household heads were listed, but a high proportion of these were women (40 of 164, or 24%).<sup>2</sup> The largest number of these (11, all but one women with children) were recorded as 'chairwoman'. Charwomen or chairwomen, normally only found in urban settings, undertook odd jobs cleaning, usually domestic but also institutional, on a daily or a day labour basis. This census suggests that single poorer women were undertaking the domestic labour for their neighbours, married or single, in order that their employers could pursue other work. Denham lies northwest of London, near enough for the metropolis to have influenced the local labour market. But the census does not tell us what the married women were doing. It is unlikely this situation was unique to Denham, but this is the only place so far discovered where it is made explicit. It suggests that parishes with few servants may not be relying on housewives for domestic work, but rather charwomen who are not identified as such (and married women as well as widowed ones may well have undertaken unrecorded charring). The next largest group of household heads in Denham were nurses (5), another type of work which is normally hidden.

The 1836 Chilvers Cotton, Warwickshire listing records the occupation of household heads only, but 20 per cent of the 503 households were female-headed.

**Table 1.2: Occupational distribution of household heads, Chilvers Cotton, 1836 (%)**

<b>Occupational Group</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<i>Independent</i>	4	1
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Farmer</i>	1	2
<i>Gardener</i>		1
<i>Keeper</i>		2
<i>Woodman</i>		1
<b>Food and Drink</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Baker</i>		5
<i>Butcher</i>		4
<i>Cheese factor</i>		1
<i>Grocer</i>		2
<i>Miller</i>		1
<i>Victualler</i>		9
<b>Clothing and textiles</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Dressmaker</i>	3	
<i>Flaxdresser</i>		1

<sup>2</sup> Early modern average is 13-15 %. Ogilvie, *Bitter Living*, 219.

<i>Framework</i>		4
<i>Ribbon</i>		2
<i>Seamstress</i>	2	
<i>Shoemaker</i>		14
<i>Stockinger</i>		1
<i>Tailor</i>		6
<i>Weaver</i>	30	106
<i>Winder</i>	27	3
<b>Other manufacturing</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Brushmaker</i>	1	
<i>Basketmaker</i>		2
<i>Blacksmith</i>		5
<i>Boilermaker</i>		1
<i>Coal Higler</i>		10
<i>Collier</i>		61
<i>Combmaker</i>		1
<i>Engineer</i>		3
<i>Limeburner</i>		2
<i>Potter</i>		3
<i>Ropespinner</i>		2
<i>Supervisor</i>		1
<i>Tanner</i>		1
<i>Whimseyman</i>		4
<b>Building</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Bricklayer/maker</i>		8
<i>Builder</i>		1
<i>Carpenter</i>		9
<i>Mason</i>		3
<i>Sawyer</i>		2
<b>Retail</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Shopkeeper</i>	1	
<b>Transport</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Boatman</i>		13
<i>Wharfinger</i>		1
<i>Wheelwright</i>		3
<b>Professions</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Schoolmaster</i>		1
<b>Service</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Barber</i>		1
<i>Labourer</i>		84
<i>Laundress/Washerwoman</i>	13	
<i>Leasemaker</i>		1
<i>Nurse</i>	1	
<i>Rent collector</i>		1
<i>Servant</i>		1
<b>Unspecified</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (102)</b>	<b>100 (401)</b>

Occupations in italics represent absolute numbers.

Chilvers Cotton illustrates several of the features associated with occupational classification of household heads: the crossover occupations done by both sexes (eg weaver) alongside the sex-segregated occupations; the relative comparability of several sectors alongside the predominance of men in the building and transport trades and the predominance of women in the clothing and textile sector. If the clothing and textile

industry is combined with other manufacturing, then it comprises 60 per cent of female employment and 58 per cent of male employment. The absence of women from the 'Food & drink' category' is striking compared with London in an earlier period (see Table 2.1). It is probably accounted for here by the several men listed with dual occupations, such as 'victualler and farmer', 'victualler and collier', 'weaver and shop'. This almost certainly is not the head of household engaging in two quite distinct occupations, but the enumerator's way of indicating that the household encompasses two significant enterprises: the wife is probably the victualler or the shopkeeper; the husband is probably the other. Female heads of household are virtually never ascribed double occupations, but the enterprises of wives are hidden under their husbands' names. The female household heads whose occupations were unspecified were almost certainly also in the labour market, since they were not 'independent', but the enumerator either did not know or did not like to say their occupation. The four independent women and one independent man must have employed not only domestic servants and some of the washerwomen, but also the the male gardener, the keepers and the woodman.

## ***2) Tax Records***

Property taxation records such as the Hearth Tax (levied in the later seventeenth century) and other household taxes such as the various poll taxes levied and the Marriage Duty Act (1695) have the scope to produce large datasets with nationwide scope. Their main drawback is that even if occupations are recorded, it is only done so for the head of household. This means that, for the most part, service occupations will be excluded from such datasets, which means it will not represent the occupational profile of females. Occasionally, particularly for the Marriage Duty Act assessments, listings indicate both the occupation of the head of household and the names of the members of the household – including servants and apprentices, enabling the examination of the number of servants per household by occupation of its head.

A sample of the 1692 poll tax assessment listings for the Bristol parishes of St Mary le Port and St Nicholas shows the difficulty of using tax records for relatively small areas.<sup>3</sup> Between the two parishes there are 279 individual householders, of which 36 are women. Just over half (58.3 per cent) of them list their occupations, compared to 88.5 per cent of men. Given this combination between a small number of female heads of household and occasional low proportions of recording of occupation of these female heads of household perhaps the most fruitful approach may be to abstract very large sample, so that even with a high rate of 'attrition', there still remains a fairly large sample of women with occupational detail.

The assessments for the 1666 Hearth Tax for the City of London, abstracted by Jacob Field for his doctoral thesis on the Great Fire, illustrates this approach but also show its

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<sup>3</sup> Bristol Record Office, Bristol St Mary le Port, 1692, F/Tax/A/12/StMP/a-b (FCTax/12/2, frames 25-9), Bristol St Nicholas, 1692, F/Tax/A/12/StN/a-d (FC/Tax/A/12/3, frames 9-19).

difficulties.<sup>4</sup> This listing was drawn up by a number of different assessors, not all of whom recorded occupations. The total sample of householders was 11,195, 1,661 of whom were female. Around ten per cent of females had their occupation recorded, representing 177 individuals, compared to around 20 per cent of males, representing 1,888 individuals. As table 1 shows, the data is slightly skewed towards the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum – particularly vastly underestimating the proportion of females engaged in service. However, such distribution can be combined with other sources, for example censuses of the poor (see below), to create a fuller illustration of female occupations.

**Table 2.1: The occupational distribution of females in the City of London from the Hearth Tax assessments, 1666 (%)**

<b>Occupational Group</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Gentry and ‘Mr. / Mrs.’	37.9	10.7
Agriculture	0	0.1
Food and Drink selling	21.5	14.7
Clothing and textiles	9.6	20.0
Other manufacturing	13.6	15.3
Building	2.3	7.2
Retail	13.6	22.2
Transport	0	2.2
Professions	1.1	7.6
Service	0.6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (177)</b>	<b>100 (1,827)</b>

### 3) *Savings banks*

Savings banks were set up in England from the second decade of the 19th century, and customer account books survive for some from this date, but normally only because they were taken over by a larger bank that has survived to the present day (and preserved their records). In the surviving depositors’ ledgers, women comprised between one third and one half of all depositors. Overwhelming, the female occupation represented in this source is service: servants constituted between three quarters and 98 per cent of all women with an occupation, and 25 – 40 per cent of all males with an occupation. But as with other sources, women are less likely to be ascribed an occupation: in the industrial northeast town of South Shields (1817-21) only 28 per cent of female depositors were occupationally identified, compared with 92 per cent of males. Larger towns have a wider range of occupations, including women in clothing, retail, and nursing. And it is possible to note that there are obvious occupational holes. So in South Shields, only eight men and three women depositors were in food production – out of a total of 568 individual (as opposed to institutional) depositors, in a town of 9000 inhabitants where

<sup>4</sup> J.F. Field, ‘Reactions and responses to the Great Fire: London and England in the later seventeenth century’ (Newcastle Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 2008), chapter 1; The National Archives, 1666 Hearth Tax assessment for the City of London, E179/252/32.

men were very largely mariners, colliers and glassmakers. At least some of the women without an occupational ascription must have been involved in food production and sales.

The most interesting findings from the savings banks lie not in the occupational descriptors but in two other discoveries: first, that some married women opened accounts in their own names (which at this date we think should not have been legally possible); and second, the deposit of frequent but irregular amounts in the accounts of women without occupational descriptors shows that they must have been in the labour market, either in day labour or in entrepreneurial activity. In other words, these women were not living off an inherited sum, nor were they employed with a regular salary. This is one of the very few sources which can demonstrate that women who were not described by an occupational tag must have been in the labour force.

#### ***4) Trade Directories / Insurance Records***

Urban trade directories were first published in the later eighteenth century and they can be used as a source for women in business. Insurance records are another similar source, from the same date, probably with a slightly wider net than trade directories. The London Guildhall is in process of digitising their national (but heavily London-dominated) insurance records. The limitations of these sources are two-fold. First, they only represent larger business which advertised or insured. Second, the number of women are absolute minima because many married women, especially in insurance records but even in trade directories, were listed under their husbands' names. For example, the 1772 directory of Manchester published by Elizabeth Raffald included her own listing only in her husband's name, although it was she who was the successful businesswoman.<sup>5</sup> Businesses listed under initials only must be treated as 'unknown', rather than as male, since the habit of using initials for males only is a late nineteenth-century habit and does not reflect practice in an earlier period.<sup>6</sup> The Liverpool Directory of 1767 includes only 38 women (8 per cent), 426 men and 41 partnerships or company names which obscure the gender of the proprietors.

#### ***5) Religious "censuses"***

The 'Return of Papists' of 1767 was a nationwide 'census' of catholics collected by anglican parish incumbents, and is particularly useful for large northern cities, the counties of Cheshire and Lancashire, and much of London – places perceived to have large numbers of threatening catholics. As with secular censuses, the type of enumeration varies from household head to individuals, and there was sometimes an element of antagonism. In large London parishes particularly, ministers refused to enumerate names, ages and occupations, but delivered only a head count.

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, Berkeley, 1996, 129-30.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women*, Oxford, 2006.

The Methodists took their own censuses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, so far, only one such census that records female occupations has been found – a series of listings taken from 1781 to 1795 for the Bedfordshire Circuit.<sup>7</sup> A sample has been taken from the July 1781 census, which not only records occupational descriptors for over half of the women in the sample, for many it also specifies their marital status, which resolves ambiguity over the use of ‘spinster’. Around 15 per cent of the females in the sample had their occupation specified as ‘carpenter’s wife’ or the like. It is my assumption that this means this was their occupation, but an occupational table both omitting and including this has been constructed.

As table 5.1 shows, it is clear that women were far more likely to be involved in service and in clothing and textiles (for this sample in particular – lace making) than males, over half of whom were engaged in agricultural occupations. It would be possibly, to a degree, to examine how representative this sample is of the wider area by comparing it to the male occupational structure of the county based on Anglican baptism registers.

**Table 5.1: The occupational distribution of the Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit, July 1781 (%)**

<b>Occupational Group</b>	<b>Females, omitting those identified by husband’s occupation</b>	<b>Females, including those identified by husband’s occupation</b>	<b>Males</b>
Gentry	2.0	1.6	0.8
Agriculture	4.1	12.9	53.8
Food and Drink selling	1.0	1.6	4.2
Clothing and textiles	58.2	50.0	14.3
Other manufacturing	0	1.6	4.2
Building	0	4.0	15.1
Retail	3.1	2.4	2.5
Professions	5.1	4.0	1.7
Service	12.2	10.5	2.5
“Poor”	14.3	11.3	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (98)</b>	<b>100 (124)</b>	<b>100 (119)</b>

*Note:* 55 females and 6 males have no occupational information whatsoever.

## **6) Court Records**

Court records are a potentially extremely useful nationwide source, and equally for a time-use approach, but they are also the most labour-intensive source. The witness's or accused's or prosecutor's occupation was rarely listed up front (always more likely for men than for women) but has to be culled from pages of testimony. There were criminal courts (heard by circulating judges in all county towns), urban courts (for debt & civil issues) and ecclesiastical courts (diocesan, hearing cases over marriage and inheritance), and their records' survival varies geographically. Ecclesiastical courts regularly asked witnesses how they had made their living for the past seven years. The best known article

<sup>7</sup> Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, “The names, numbers, occupations, residences etc. of the members of the Society in the Bedfordshire Circuit, July 1781”, 1781-1804, MB1.



on women's work uses these sources for London.<sup>8</sup> Criminal courts also often asked about status, and women regularly gave occupational rather than marital answers. However, printed editions of court records may leave out these details,<sup>9</sup> necessitating painstaking archival research. The courts' different jurisdictions mean that each has its own particular occupational cross-section.

The proportion of women appearing in the courts varies; the highest proportions may be one third of the total number of persons testifying, in the criminal and ecclesiastical courts in the London area. Even in nearby Essex, the proportion of women testifying in the criminal courts in the eighteenth century falls to 13% (16 of 121), and in the London Mayor's Court, which heard primarily business cases, hardly any women at all appear.

Licensing records for the sale of alcohol and bread and for the regulation of weights and measures also come under administrative court records. These provide only absolute minima of women working in these sectors: by reason of coverture, the husband was legally liable for his wife's activities and so it was he rather than she who was recorded, even if his business was entirely separate from hers. In Warwickshire in 1797, only 10 per cent of 102 persons licensing weights and measures were female.

### ***7) Ecclesiastical and Parochial Records***

England's national network of Anglican parishes and the voluminous archival material detailing their day-to-day administration has the benefit of breadth, but the depth of its information on female occupations appears to be lacking. Two types of document available for most parishes at some time between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries – the accounts of the churchwardens and the overseers of the poor (which are occasionally combined) are not really of use for our purposes. Churchwardens' accounts are limited in their scope, mostly detailing the upkeep of the fabric of the churches themselves, and in the vast majority of accounts that have been examined, full information is not included for both the payee and the items or services purchased. Similarly, overseers' accounts tend not to be very detailed and although they record sums paid to the poor of the parish and rates collected from parishioners, none that have been examined have indicated exact occupations for either. Some series of overseers' accounts survive that are of use, but these tend to be of the form of bundles of individual receipts or vouchers. They have the advantage of detail, but there is the question as to whether they represent all of the sums paid out by the parish in the period. For the parish of Playden in Sussex, 439 accounts vouchers, representing 1,690 individual sums paid out by the overseers of the poor survive from c. 1740 to c. 1820 for items such as clothing, footwear, schooling and nursing for the parish's poor survive.<sup>10</sup> But around one

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Earle, 'The female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser, 42:3.

<sup>9</sup> The Old Bailey Online, for example, which is a printed version of proceedings, omits female occupations. Erickson, 'Married women's occupations in eighteenth-century London', *Continuity & Change* 23:2 (2008), Appendix, 298, note b.

<sup>10</sup> East Sussex Record Office, Playden, overseers of the poor: accounts vouchers, PAR445/31/8-15, 19.

in five of the vouchers' payees could not be assigned a gender because of inadequacies in the record keeping (for example, only recording the first initial of the payee). Table 7.1 shows that clothing and schooling saw the highest percentages of monies paid out to females. This dataset needs more analysis and could take into account repeat payments to individuals and changes over time but it does show how sources which do not record occupational descriptors per se can be extremely useful.

**Table 7.1: Gender breakdown in sums paid out by the overseers of the poor of Playden, 1740-1820**

<b>Type</b>	<b>% of total paid to females</b>	<b>% of total paid to males</b>
Clothing	41.5	59.5
Footwear	1.8	98.2
Victuals	0.3	99.7
Fuel	0	100
Medical attendance	0	100
Pauper funerals	5.5	94.5
Workhouse expenses	5.5	94.5
Schooling poor children	22.1	77.9
Lodging paupers	8.0	92.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>90.5</b>

Diocesan records, for the most part, do not include much detail on female occupations, with the exception of the licensing of midwives, which was administered by the diocese. These records take two forms: certificates of worthiness to serve as midwives and records of taking an oath to practice as such in the diocesan or archdiocesan court or letters of support from the midwives' parish asking for them to be licensed officially as a midwife. So far, one uniquely detailed source of midwifery has been located: a 1753 list of licensed midwives in the archdioceses of Norfolk, Norwich, Suffolk and Sudbury, which records the midwives in each parish that year.<sup>11</sup> Such aggregate totals must surely be regarded as minima, as the extant records indicate that midwifery was practiced without license. For example, Anne Pyke of Abingdon (Berkshire) was licensed as a midwife by the archdeaconry court on 2 December 1684, but a certificate of competence written on 19 July 1682 stated that she had acted successfully as a midwife before this date.<sup>12</sup>

### **8) “Censuses” of the Poor**

There are occasional local listings produced, at a parish, town or poor law union level, of the poor in the area. These listings occasionally specify the occupation they were engaged in, and sometimes the sums earned by the poor. They also fill in some of the gaps left by other sources, which can be skewed towards the upper echelons of local

<sup>11</sup> Norfolk Record Office, List of schoolmasters, surgeons and midwives in the archdeaconries of Norfolk, Norwich, Suffolk and Sudbury, 1753, DN/VSM1/2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Berkshire Record Office, Miscellaneous archdeaconry court papers, 1623-95, D/A2/c65, fol. 23r; ‘Faculties to practise surgery, midwifery &c’, D/A2/c162, fol. 37r.

society. So far, listings with occupational information have been located for Norwich (1570), Salisbury (1635), Wool in Dorset (1793), Portsmouth Workhouse (1804-15), and the Ampthill (Bedfordshire) Poor Law Union (1835-6).<sup>13</sup> Like many other sources, the main drawback of these sources is that occasionally only information on the head of household is included, meaning that service may be again underestimated: for example in the Norwich listing, 3.7 per cent of the females in the sample were servants compared to 24.3 per cent of the female poor in Ampthill in 1835-6.

### **9) Apprenticeship Records**

The apprenticeship system, derived from medieval guilds and applied to national systems of poor relief in the later sixteenth century, provided basic subsistence and occupational training for hundreds of thousands of children. The parish records relating to the apprenticeship of poor children (sometimes the forced apprenticeship of poor children) survive for many parts of England. These are predominantly for boys, but also girls. Most girls at this social level were apprenticed to 'housewifery'. However, the male overseers of the poor who were arranging the apprenticeship were vague on what housewifery involved and included skills that historians might not have: so an Essex girl in 1629 was apprenticed to a husbandman and his wife to learn "to spinne carde knitt and all other worke belonging to a mayd servant". The second most common apprenticeship for these girls was to husbandry.

Towns and cities had charitable schools by the sixteenth century, and these also apprenticed their pupils to trades after they had learned to read and write, and often to cast accounts. But it has proven difficult to find surviving records outside of London, and some of these schools took only boys. The largest charity school in London was Christ's Hospital, which did take girls, but never apprenticed them to housewifery, at least in the eighteenth century – only to trades.

Each city appears to have followed different rules on the admission of women to the guilds.<sup>14</sup> The traditional historiographical view is that women were insignificant in the guild system as they could not become members of the court which governed each guild. Girls were apprenticed within the guild system in tiny numbers, but in quite distinctive patterns.<sup>15</sup> And virtually all guilds allowed widows of masters to continue the trade and take apprentices, which was the crucial element of freedom, without the title of freedom. English guilds thus appear different from German guilds, which did not allow single women

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<sup>13</sup> Norwich Census of the Poor 1570, ed. J.F. Pound; *Poverty in early Stuart Salisbury*, ed. P. Slack; Dorset History Centre, Weld Family of Lulworth, list of poor persons in Wool, 1793, D/WLC/AE20; Portsmouth City Museum and Records Office, Portsmouth Workhouse, Muster Books, 1808, 1813, 1815, PL6/12-16, 1804-5; Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, Pauper Description Lists, Bedfordshire Poor Law Union (Ampthill), 1835-6, PUAR 7/1-17.

<sup>14</sup> For example, York admitted women to the guilds, but did not require freedom of the City; Newcastle guilds did not admit women to the freedom at all; London guilds admitted women and required freedom of the city.

<sup>15</sup> A.L. Erickson, 'Clockmakers, Milliners and Mistresses: Women trading in London 1700-1750', forthcoming on HPSS website.

to practice and required widows to hire journeymen. At the same time, they appear more socially exclusive than French guilds.

In 1705 a national tax on guild apprenticeships was introduced, and these records survive and are being examined in a different project.<sup>16</sup> However, the tax only applied to apprenticeships where the premium (the amount paid to the master with the apprentice) was over £5. Preliminary comparison of the tax records with individual company records suggests, first, that more than half of apprenticeships involved a premium of less than £5, and second, that even apprenticeships whose premium was over £5 appear to have escaped the tax.

### *10) School Accounts*

There were a large number of parochial schools in early modern England, some of which left behind useful accounts. In addition to this, there were schools run by other bodies, such as trade guilds. Many of these schools administered apprenticeships of their students (see above), but the records discussed in this section are the accounts of the schools, which include not only payments to staff but payments for school materials and occasionally clothing and provisions for students. As with other account books, the level of detail for most schools was insufficient, however even for those with very low levels of detail, it was usually possible to identify the annual wage paid to the school master or mistress of the school. On occasion it appears that a husband and wife were hired together and paid together to serve as school master and mistress, for example in the Sir John Hayward School in Strood, Kent in 1831, Mr and Mrs Roany were paid between them £20 per annum to act as master and mistress.<sup>17</sup> The parish of Ramsay in Huntingdonshire ran two parochial schools – a grammar school and a ‘spinning school’ for infants, the master of the former was paid £60 per annum whereas the mistress of the latter was paid just £7. Interestingly a female (Sarah Poulter) served as treasurer for both schools and was paid £1 11s 6d per annum and 4s 2.5d per annum for filling this role for the grammar school and spinning school, respectively.<sup>18</sup> The parish school (for boys) of St Sepulchre Holborn in London kept detailed accounts from 1750 to 1840 of the disbursements of the treasurer, which showed that females employed by the school tended to be engaged in cleaning the school and making shirts for the boys.<sup>19</sup>

### *11) Hospital Accounts*

From the eighteenth century, London has the best sets of hospital accounts, for some ten different hospitals, covering both employees and occasional payments to suppliers. It

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<sup>16</sup> Patrick Wallis, London School of Economics.

<sup>17</sup> Medway Archives, Salary Receipts, Sir John Hayward’s Charity, 1831-3, Ch46/A142.

<sup>18</sup> Huntingdonshire Archives, Ramsey Grammar School, accounts (1<sup>st</sup> series), 1760-1897, RB/6/13-17; Ramsey Spinning Infants School, accounts, 1760-1912, RB/6/42-9.

<sup>19</sup> Guildhall Library, St Sepulchre Holborn Boys School Treasurers Accounts, 1750-1840, MS 7237/1-3.

may be possible to work back to at least the mid-sixteenth century for the medieval foundations, such as St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's Hospitals, but prior to the eighteenth century the records are found not in account books but in fortnightly governors' minutes, which are more labour-intensive. Among the eighteenth century account books, Chelsea Hospital for soldiers stands out. Some 10 per cent of the suppliers of the hospital in the period 1775-1800 were women, and they included the chimneysweeper and the slater. (Like the licensing records, payment records will also obscure married women in trade.) Regular female employees included as well as the housekeeper, the porter, the usher, the sexton, the clock repairer, and 24 matrons.

Other account books with sufficient detail provide important information on occupations such as nursing, providing information about wage levels, and possibly seasonality and duration of such work. The Foundling Hospital, with its base in London from 1750 and regional branches around the country, is a valuable source of information. Its branch in Ackworth, West Yorkshire, in particular, has detailed records for wages paid and items purchased. The Shrewsbury branch also has a detailed register of the servants hired.<sup>20</sup> St John's Hospital in Bracebridge, Lincolnshire, has a very detailed register of the engagement (and dismissal) of its employees, including information on their previous employment and their length of employment at the hospital and reason for leaving.<sup>21</sup> The Warwick County Lunatic Asylum annual accounts also contain some aggregate information on wages paid to female staff and the jobs women were employed to do at the hospital.<sup>22</sup> So far, registers of in-mates and admissions to hospitals have not proved useful for measuring female occupations, as very few record occupations at all, and even when they do, the occupation of females is not recorded.

## ***12) Account books***

By far the largest class of useful records located so far has been account books left by families or estates (for brevity here they will be referred to as account books, but catalogues also record them as day books, cash books, salary books, journals and ledgers), which detail payments made by the record keeper or someone acting on their behalf. For the reasons discussed above, and other factors, many of these account books are of little practical use as a result of inadequacies (for the purposes of this project) of record keeping. The main difficulty is that particularly before the eighteenth century, it was comparatively rare for account books to record *both* the payee and the goods or services purchased, rather than just one or the other. As a result, this class of source is

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<sup>20</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, Foundling Hospital, Ackworth, Receipt books of payments by the hospital for wages and materials, 1760-70, A/FH/Q/38; Receipt book: records of servants' wages, 1757-65, A/FH/Q/25; Receipt book: records of servants' wages, 1766-74, A/FH/Q/27; Servants' Register, r1757-74, A/FH/Q/60; Daily journal, 1760-74, A/FH/D/01/016/001-006; Foundling Hospital, Shrewsbury, Servants' entry and discharge register, 1758-67, A/FH/D/02/016.

<sup>21</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, St John's Hospital, Bracebridge, Engagement and Dismissal of Attendants and Servants Book, 1852-74, HOSP/ST JOHN'S1/6/1.

<sup>22</sup> Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick County Lunatic Asylum, Annual reports of the Committee of Visitors, the Superintendent, and from 1872 the Commissioners in Lunacy, 1852-83, CR 1664/30.

most widespread for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but this does mean that datasets collected by this project based on parochial records and the census provide an important means of comparison between the accounts and the wider local occupational structure.

In many cases account books do not tell the whole story, as in many large proportions of the payments were disbursements to single individuals (usually a steward or a spouse) for their management of part of the estate or household. Thus, such a source will not tell the whole story. For example, a six month sample from 1715-16 of the accounts of John Orlebar, a Bedfordshire gentleman and lawyer show that over one third of the amounts paid out in his accounts were to his wife for 'quarterage' or 'housekeeping', and her accountings do not survive.<sup>23</sup>

Many 'accounts' are simply bundles of receipts, and although they may be detailed, there is the possibility that items may be missing from the series. Also, when accounts record items or goods purchased, a payment to an individual may mask the fact that other members of their household may have been engaged in the activity they were paid for. These account books can broadly be divided into two categories: estate and farm accounts and household accounts.

#### *a) Estate and Farm Accounts*

This class of documents is mainly rural and tends to deal with the agricultural sector of the economy. It ranges from accounts of small farms to very large aristocratic estates. Many such farm accounts only contain details of agricultural items bought and sold and for larger estates many accounts only contain information on rentals. However, accounts with sufficient detail have the scope to show types and seasonality of female rural work, wage levels and numbers employed compared to males, and how these factors may have changed over time.

Weeding and hay-making appear to have been the chief occupations women were engaged in, but the latter was strictly seasonal. For example, on the Byram Estate in Buckinghamshire, thirty females were employed, usually at six pence per day, in hay-making in July and August 1769.<sup>24</sup> For accounts where comparable Census information exists, it may be informative to compare the occupations in the rest of the year to the females who were engaged as hay-makers. An initial analysis of a 1770 return of the labourers employed at the Goodwood Estate in Sussex provides another glimpse of female rural labour. Females were mostly employed in the gardens, stone picking, weeding or haying at the rate of six pence per day, whereas men were paid (at minimum)

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<sup>23</sup> Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, Personal Account Books of John Orlebar, 1715-28, OR 2054-5.

<sup>24</sup> Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Byram Estate and Farm, accounts, 1769-77, D/RA/4B/3.

twice as much per day and were mostly engaged in activities such as sawing, cleaving stones, cutting furze or cutting.<sup>25</sup>

The farm at the branch of the Foundling Hospital in Westerham, Kent, kept fairly detailed records for three years from 1760, and from this, per diem rates for agricultural activities can be calculated, although this technique does exclude activities which were paid for by amount of acres mowed or volume of grain cleaned (the latter activity appears to have been heavily female-dominated).<sup>26</sup> Table 12.1 shows the disparity in both wage rates and total days worked at the farm, as well as the fact that females were overwhelmingly employed in four activities: haying, hopping, raking and weeding.

**Table 12.1: Agricultural labour, by gender, at Westerham Farm, Kent, 1760-3**

Activity	Total no. female days worked	Mean paid per diem (pence)	Total no. male days worked	Mean paid per diem (pence)
Carring	0.5	8	51.3	37
Cleaning	5.5	3	0	0
Cleaving	0	0	4.5	14
Cocking	6	8	0	0
Digging	0	0	6.0	13
Filling	0	0	7.0	14
Harvesting	1.8	14	29.0	22
Haying	156.3	8	32.5	12
Hedging	0	0	0.5	16
Hopping	51.8	8	35.0	15
Howing	0	0	2.0	24
Labouring	5.0	7	639	15
Mending Gaps	0	0	2.0	13
Ploughing	0	0	577.5	9
Raking	40.3	14	0	0
Thatching	0	0	1.0	40
Threshing	0	0	22.5	14
Turning	0.5	14	0	0
Weeding	78.0	7	4.0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>345.5</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>1,413.75</b>	<b>16.4</b>

Account books of some large aristocratic estates have the potential to provide occupational detail about wider geographical areas, as well as possibly a wider range of occupations. These types of accounts, representing long-term going concerns transferred through generations, also may tend to run for longer chronological ranges than those for smaller units. As many of these accounts were kept by paid and trained stewards or accountants, the level of detail tends to be high. For example, the estate accounts of the Barons Savile in Nottinghamshire includes sections on expenses for brewing, husbandry, stables, hop farm, killing vermin, and salaries of employees, and run for over 50 years.

<sup>25</sup> West Sussex Record Office, Goodwood Estate, return of labourers employed there, 1770, GOODWOOD/E5422.

<sup>26</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, Foundling Hospital, Westerham, Journal of farm and tradesmen's accounts, 1760-73, A/FH/D/03/007/001-002.

Similarly, the estates of the Duke of Portland cover a wide range of types of employment.<sup>27</sup>

*b) Household Accounts*

Finally, the smallest geographical unit of accounts is considered – the individual household. However, the possible range of occupations it may cover is in inverse correlation to its size. They occur in both urban and rural areas, for a range of different types of household, from small trades-people to large households of the gentry. More than any other source, this class of documents has the possibility to illuminate most the profile of female service at the micro-level in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

First, household disbursements separate from payments to salaried servants will be considered. For the most part, these record payments to trades-people or to casual, non-salaried, labourers. As for all other account books, many cannot be used for our purposes because of a lack of detail in record-keeping. Unlike some records of rural labourers, these accounts do not tend to record the number of days worked. Here, a sample from the household account book of the third Duke of Portland for 1772 will be considered.<sup>28</sup> Firstly, table 12.2 shows the types of activities that females employed by these household were engaged in and table 12.3 aggregates this data and compares it to the males employed by this household. Males tended to be employed in a broader range of activities than females. However, as has been stated above, a payment to a male does not mean that a female was not engaged in the economic activity for which the male was being paid.

**Table 12.2: Activities of female payees from the household account book of the third Duke of Portland, 1772**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Occasions</b>	<b>Mean paid per occasion (pence)</b>
Assisting in the kitchen	3	299
Chairing in the kitchen	1	624
Cleaning Tripe	1	44
Laundry	2	526
Nursing	2	681
Scouring pewter	8	65
Supplying dairy products	3	1375
Supplying fruit	2	266
Supplying medical items	1	79
Supplying muffins	1	98
Supplying tea	13	382

<sup>27</sup> Nottinghamshire Archives, Savile Family of Rufford, Estate Accounts: Nottinghamshire 1730-61, DD/SR/6/1-8; Savile Family of Rufford, Estate Accounts: Nottinghamshire 1769-81, DD/SR/6/2/1-11; Account book of Joseph Fletcher (Welbeck steward) to John Cleaver (estate agent) for the Duke of Portland, 1774-7, DD/P/6/7/2/25.

<sup>28</sup> Nottinghamshire Archives, Household account book of Adam Price to William Henry, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1772-4, 1776, DD/P/6/8/1/1.



**Table 12.3: Payments from the household account book of the third Duke of Portland, 1772**

Type of Activity	Total no. occasions female	Mean paid per occasion (pence)	Total no. occasions male	Mean paid per occasion (pence)
Cleaning	11	200	1	180
Furniture and repairs	0	0	14	2,801
Gardening	0	0	1	384
Metalwork	0	0	3	4,670
Nursing	3	480	0	0
Supplying coal	0	0	1	34,128
Supplying food and drink	23	464	29	1,320
Supplying textiles and clothing	0	0	9	17,115
Supplying other goods	0	0	17	2,897
Transporting and carrying	0	0	19	1,247
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>3,757</b>

Finally, we come to records of servants employed in households. Typically, the records of larger households are more instructive, as they employed more staff in a greater range of activities over longer periods of accounting. In most cases, these sources record the annual wage that the member of staff was to be paid and their position in the household. Occasionally some accounts of servants hired offer even more detail on their previous circumstances and their length of service in a household. One atypically detailed account was kept by Baron Belper of Derbyshire from 1852 to 1874. He noted the age and previous employment and residence of all of the servants he hired, as well as their position and annual wage rates. However, his choicest comments were reserved for explaining why the servant left his employ. For example, on Jane Glover, who he hired as a housekeeper at £42 per annum in 1853 but dismissed in 1855: ‘she was full of scandal my clothes were all in rags & her doctrine seemed to be that all my servants must have high ways & do nothing because the place was dull’. Elizabeth Dipple was hired as a housemaid at £10 per annum at the end of 1855, but lasted less than two months, Belper noting, that she was ‘thoroughly ignorant of her business, might have done for a maid of all work at a low public house’.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond such memoranda, there are more conventional account books of servants’ wages. Table 12.4 abstracts some of the wage levels for various positions in the later eighteenth

<sup>29</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Strutt family, Barons Belper, servants wages book and ‘mems about servants’, D3772/E32/94, 1852-74.

century. There was some variation by region, but it is clear that the only position females were engaged in that had notably high wage levels was housekeeper.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 12.4: Servants and mean wage levels (£) for three later 18th century households**

	<b>Position</b>	<b>Cumberland, 1766-71</b>	<b>Derbyshire, 1766-9</b>	<b>Hertfordshire, 1783-1808</b>
Female staff	Dairy maid	4	4	-
	Housekeeper	20	25	19
	Housemaid	4	6	7
	Kitchen maid	4	5	7
	Laundry maid	4	7	-
Male staff	Butler	-	17	21
	Coachman	16	18	23
	Cook	-	42	-
	Footman	-	12	12
	Gamekeeper	9	6	-
	Gardener	25	-	14
	Groom	9	14	-
	Postillion	8	5	-

It is our intention to pursue the most promising of these sources further in a future research project, and to bring the results to bear not only light on economic sectors, but also on cultural assumptions about paid work and who has an occupation, on the distinctions between work and occupation, and on notions of skill and gender.

<sup>30</sup> Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle), Account book for wages and boot money paid to servants at Lowther, 1766-71 D/LONS/L3/4/320; Derbyshire Record Office, Burdett family, baronets, of Foremark, Derbyshire, Servants' wage receipt books with signatures of servants, D5054/15/1-2, 1744-93; Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Mrs. [Laetitia] Collier, household accounts, 1783-1808, D/EV/F445.